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C O N F I D E N T I A L LJUBLJANA 000629

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SI](#)

SUBJECT: OSCE CO-CHAIRS BRIEF CIO RUPEL

Classified By: CDA Maryruth Coleman for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary: Minsk Group Co-Chairs briefed OSCE CIO Rupel on the eve of his Caucasus trip. The Co-Chairs advised that progress on Karabakh would be on hold until after the November Azerbaijan elections. They encouraged the CIO to probe with Presidents Kocharian and Aliyev for candid readouts of their Kazan meeting and for next steps post-November in the peace process. End summary.

2. (C) OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs Steven Mann, Yuri Merzlyakov (Russia), and OSCE Representative Kasprzyck met in Ljubljana August 28 with Slovenian FM and OSCE CIO Dmitrij Rupel at the latter's request to brief him on developments in the Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations. French Co-Chair Fassier was unable to be present but dispatched his assistant to attend the meeting. Rupel will travel to Tbilisi, Yerevan, and Baku September 4-6 and requested an update from the mediators. The Co-Chairs came to Slovenia from Russia, where they met with Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers and hosted a tete-a-tete meeting in Kazan between the two presidents.

3. (C) Merzlyakov said the situation was well-timed for a CIO visit and he complimented Rupel on being the first CIO to do two visits to the Caucasus in his term in office. He sketched out the situation in the talks since May (when Rupel met with the Co-Chairs in Warsaw). The same basic positions remain on the table since Warsaw; there are gaps between the sides that still need to be narrowed. The Co-Chairs tried to close those gaps in Kazan but did not succeed. They believed that no progress would be possible before the November elections. The Co-Chairs were, however, encouraged by the continuing positive atmospherics between the two presidents. The window for a resolution is 2006. Mann noted that the Co-Chairs are planning to meet separately with each foreign minister in the weeks ahead to get a candid view from each side about the Kazan meeting, but that Rupel's visit offered a superb opportunity to get such a readout. He would be the first OSCE official to see either president after Kazan. Rupel agreed to offer the Co-Chairs a readout after his trip.

4. (C) Rupel asked for advice on handling the Azerbaijani request for OSCE assistance in conducting elections in Karabakh for Azerbaijani parliamentary seats. The Co-Chairs advised that they considered this request fundamentally propagandistic and suggested that Rupel turn the question around if raised: how would this move the negotiations forward? How did Azerbaijan expect that this could be practically implemented?

5. (C) Rupel looked forward to the OSCE Ministerial and hoped strongly for an agreed statement on Nagorno-Karabakh. The Co-Chairs assessed chances of a statement as very likely and agreed to take on the task of developing a draft in advance of the Ministerial.

6. (U) Ambassador Mann has cleared this cable.

COLEMAN

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